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TELLING HEARST

First American Interview with East German Leader

The views of the Government of the German Democratic Republic on reunification, elections, atomic arms and many other subjects were defined by Deputy Prime Minister Walter Ulbricht in an interview with U. S. press baron William Randolph Hearst, owner of the Hearst press on April 26th.

It was the first interview given by an East German leader to the American press. On this and the following pages GERMAN REPORT presents some of the main points from the interview, which lasted several hours:

Question: *"Do you hope to see a united Germany some day? If so, what do you think the procedure should be to bring this about?"*

Ulbricht: "You must realise that reunification has been hindered by the inclusion of West Germany in NATO, and by its remilitarisation. The situation has further deteriorated since the authorisation by the West German parliament to carry out nuclear armament.

"Reunification is only possible if the obstacles created by West German militarisation are removed.

"Possibly we gauge German militarism differently from you. It would not be good for the American people if they were to believe that the German militarists have had a change of heart and become tame. Speculations about using resurrected German militarism for their own ends against the East could have very unpleasant consequences for the American people.

"If the US Government stopped flights with atomic bombs over West Germany and did not supply West Germany with atomic weapons; and if the US Government reliquished its atomic bases in West Germany and placed no obstacles in the way of an atom-free zone in Central Europe, this would effectively block the anti-national and incendiary plans of aggressive circles in West Germany.

"A federation of the two German states, as proposed by us, would help inner-German relations, create opportunities for agreement on joint measures for the maintenance of peac and participation in preparing a peace treaty with Germany and help to overcome gradually the economic, cultural and personal effects of the partitioning of Germany.

"This is the only road which remains open. But even this road may be blocked by the atomic armament of West Germany."

Unity Vote?

Question: *"Do you think the German people will ever get an opportunity to vote on reunification? If so, how soon in your opinion? If not, why not?"*

Ulbricht: "Do you really believe that, after thirteen years of partition, the Government of the German Democratic Republic and the peace-loving forces in Germany would be ready to stake the peaceful future of Germany on a ballot paper and take the risk that the militarists and atom-war politicians might extend their rule to the whole of Germany?

"There is no other possibility than to cancel various aspects of this militarisation; reunification merely through the ballotbox is a complete illusion.

"We have repeatedly, for instance in 1952, proposed that steps be taken to conclude a peace treaty and that representatives of the two German states discuss the holding of all-German elections. The Soviet Government also supported these proposals.

"Both the US Secretary of State and Adenauer were at that time opposed to the conclusion of a peace treaty and to free all-German elections. Adenauer told the leaders of his party, the Christian Democratic Union, that West Germany must arm first. The US Government and Adenauer opposed peaceful reunification because they aimed at annexation by force of the German

(cont. on next page)

Foreign students in East Germany. Story on page 77

Democratic Republic by the West Zone of Germany.

Militarism's Come-back

"In the meantime NATO and the Bonn Government have reinstalled German militarism in West Germany, and this has produced a completely new situation. The aim cannot be to create a militaristic united Germany, bound for atomic war; the great majority of the German people in East and West want a peaceful, democratic Germany.

"Unification of the two German states today requires a protracted process of rapprochement and understanding, and it would be mere speculation to name any date for joint elections. The time will be ripe when there is no longer any danger that one of the German states intends to occupy the other and when, above all, conditions for really free and democratic elections have been created in West Germany too.

"We believe, however, that the German people in East and West should have an immediate opportunity to vote freely on one vital question — on the atomic armament of West Germany and the creation of an atom-free zone.

"There can be no doubt that the overwhelming majority of Germans would reject atomic armament and the stationing of atom rockets in West Germany; they would vote for an atom-free zone in Europe.

UN Supervision

Question: *"What are your objections to UN supervision of a vote to determine the will of the German people, a procedure which is implied in the name German Democratic Republic?"*

Ulbricht: "In West Germany a situation has been created — through the rule of one party, the Christian Democratic Union — in which the population are not even allowed to vote against atomic armament. It seems to me that a thorough control here would be the right thing, since a serious danger to the German people and to the world is brewing up there.

"Representatives of the USA have recommended that such states as Israel, Pakistan, Brazil and so on should participate in supervising elections in Germany; that is to say, states which are more or less dependent on the United Staates, and whose democratic character is debatable, should intervene in our internal German affairs.

"Neither can we overlook the fact that there is an idea in the West that such supervision might lead to de facto military occupation of the German Democratic Republic. These are suggestions which we simply cannot consider.

"If the USA wishes to supervise elections on a basis of reciprocity, then the governments of the German Democratic Republic and the USA can agree that a commission from the German Democratic Republic supervise elections in the USA and a US commission could then certainly come to the German Democratic Republic and occupy itself with our elections, or with possible future all-German elections."

Why Talk?

Question: *"The Government of the German Democratic Republic maintains that talks should be held between East and West German governments. What good do you think such talks would have when the positions of both sides are so contradictory?"*

Ulbricht: "We take a very sober view of the situation in the West Zone of Germany. When we propose negotiations with the Government of the Federal Republic we repress our feelings about this government and proceed from an estimate of the actual situation and the interests of the nation.

"The results of such talks would be a relaxation of international tension and a step towards ending partition. We have for instance repeatedly proposed that both states should refrain from introducing military conscription; that agreement should be reached on the size, armament and stationing of the armed forces of both German states, and on a request to the Four Powers to withdraw foreign troops step by step from the whole of Germany and from the other European countries.

We recently proposed that a joint standpoint on the contents of a peace treaty with Germany be worked out, as well as a joint standpoint on ending nuclear tests, since we believe that this would be an important German contribution to the pending Summit Conference.

"We have also proposed agreement on banning the stationing and manufacture of atom bombs and atomic weapons in both German states, and propaganda for atomic war. And finally that the two German states should leave NATO and the Warsaw Treaty.

"There are thus many useful subjects for discussion. Agreement on these would clear the path for German reunification and would serve the national interest of the entire German people. These proposals have the support of the majority of Germans.

"The fact that there are in Germany two states with differing social systems need be no obstacle to negotiations on questions connected with relaxation of tension and the cause of peace."

Communist First?

Question: *"Critics of the Government of the German Democratic Republic say that it is Communist first and German second. Would you care to make a statement regarding this?"*

Ulbricht: "There is no contradiction between the words 'German' and 'Communist'.

"The German working class, the Communist Party and the best elements of the Social Democratic Party were always the representatives of the best traditions of the German people. During World War One we led the struggle against the German militarists... during the Weimar Republic we stood for democracy and a German policy of peace and friendship. We continued this fight with terrible losses, in the period of the Hitler tyranny. The policy of the Socialist Unity Party and the Government of the German Democratic Republic is based upon these good traditions.

"Here we have taken the necessary steps to prevent the forces which were responsible for World War Two and its horrors from ever again gaining influence.

Potsdam Agreement

"In 1945 the chiefs of state of the USA, the USSR and Britain concluded an agreement in Potsdam which laid down the basic principles for the future form of Germany and its development to a peace-loving state. Your President worked out these principles together with the heads of state of the two other powers. There is no important difference between the ideas of your President at that time on the future development of Germany and our ideas on the subject.

"The only difference today is that the Government of the German Democratic Republic has acted in accordance with the principles laid down then, while the Government of the USA has broken the agreement.

"Thus we not only stand for the national interests of our people; we are also the legal German Government in the spirit of the Potsdam Agreement. This makes it all the more astonishing that the government of the USA still refuses to recognise this legal German Gov-

NO ROCKETS IN E. GERMANY

No rocket bases have been built in East Germany, the Foreign Ministry of the German Democratic Republic officially declared on April 26th. The announcement said:

"The western press has reported that Norwegian Foreign Minister Lange stated that the Soviet Union had built rocket bases in the German Democratic Republic. This claim is in no way in accordance with the facts, and is a complete invention... This statement by the Norwegian Foreign Minister is particularly to be regretted since it favours the atomic policy pursued in West Germany, thus increasing the danger to the peoples of Europe."

ernment and that it has allied itself with the Government of the German Western Zones, a government which systematically breaks international agreements and upholds the worst German traditions.

"Today the position is that the very same people who carried war across Europe under Hitler — and who also waged war against the USA — now sit in the Government in Bonn and head the Bonn army.

"That is the question with which we must deal today. That is why the German people show such interest in these SA and SS men, these followers of Hitler like Strauss, Oberlaender, Speidel, Globke etc. These are the people who, under Hitler, provided the political and legal arguments for genocide and carried it out in the most barbarous fashion.

"We should be glad to supply you with extensive and authentic material on this subject."

Communism Better?

Question: *"If, as you maintain, the Communist system is better than free enterprise, how do you explain the far greater progress in the Federal Republic in respect to recovery, the standard of living, stability of the currency on the international market etc.?"*

Ulbricht: "First a word on the so-called free economy of the West. In the West Zone of Germany the big monopolies have freedom to exploit the workers and to make huge profits. And the workers are free to let themselves be exploited and to lose their jobs in case of a slump. You know that the first signs of a slump have already appeared in West Germany.

"We have a stable currency. In contrast to the West Zone the German Democratic Republic has launched its economic construction without getting into debt. Our economy belongs to the working people. We have here no enterprises owned by foreign capitalists. You know yourself that American capital has considerable influence in important large West German enterprises, so that West German workers are working to put money in the pockets of American capitalists. We have nothing of that kind here.

Social Services

"The living standard is not only measured in wages, but also in social services, which are far better here than in West Germany. Taking a very sober view of the matter, we can say that the majority of workers here live better than in West Germany. The prices of many consumer goods and of the most important public services, such as rents, communications, gas, electricity etc. are considerably lower than in West Germany.

"Some articles still cost more, but this will improve with the expansion of industrial production; and some are still scarce, because income and purchasing power have risen so much that production cannot keep up. But this will also be overcome.

"You say that the West Zone has made greater progress than we in reconstruction. This is a pious belief which does not correspond to the facts.

"In the few years of existence of our state we have built up a new and better society. A serious situation arose here as as result of partition, since the most important branches of heavy industry, engineering and other industries were concentrated almost entirely in West Germany. We have had to build up a whole series of completely new industries in order to overcome the most serious disproportions in our industry and to lay a solid foundation for our workers' and peasants' state.

"In 1957 the increase in production compared with 1956 was 5.1 per cent in the West Zone of Germany, but 7 per cent in the German Democratic Republic. At present industrial production is stagnating in West Germany, whereas our production rises further according to plan.

"Many American journalists who visited the Leipzig Fair saw for themselves that, although we are a small country, we can point to significant achievements in science and technology."

A-Weapons

Question: *"Are you afraid that West Germany might launch an attack on East Germany?"*

Ulbricht: "That would be in accord with the traditions of German imperialism. We have had the experience of two world wars. Herr Adenauer has the same tactics as the German imperialists used when they were preparing the Second World War. Then they demanded equality in the field of arms. Now they are demanding atomic weapons. Here in the German Democratic Republic we have no atomic weapons, and we have not asked for any There is therefore no danger that the German Democratic Republic might make an atomic attack on West Germany. **I must repeat: We have no nuclear weapons, and the troops stationed here have none."**

Persecution

Question: *"What about the persecution of the church in the German Democratic Republic?"*

Ulbricht: "There is no persecution of the Church. Every citizen here has the right to be an atheist or to hold religious beliefs. We used to have quite normal relations with the West German Church leadership. The position altered when the German Church leadership concluded an agreement with Adenauer's Government on religious observances in the West German Army. Since this time the church leadership, under Bishop Dibelius, has been supporting NATO policy. We have no differ-

ences with the church in the German Democratic Republic, but only with the church leadership in West Germany and West Berlin. We have said to them quite frankly: If you want normal relations, then cancel the agreement on military religious observances.

"You have asked whether I myself am an atheist. I have been, all my life. But we have Christians in our Government, both Catholics and Protestants, and we work together with them in a spirit of friendship. I have never had any dispute with Luitpold Steidle, Minister of Health, on questions of religion or philosophy, and Minister Steidle is a strict Catholic. With him I discuss questions affecting the health services, and not questions affecting religion or the church. If he wants to go to church, then that is his business. We don't discuss such questions in the cabinet. Deputy Prime Minister Sefrin is a member of the Evangelical Church, and so is Herr Burmeister, Minister of Posts."

In reply to another question, Walter Ulbricht flatly denied western reports that he is, or had been a Soviet citizen, or that he held officer's rank in the Soviet Army.

BOMB DEBATE WILL DOMINATE SOCIALIST CONGRESS

The question of nuclear weapons and in particular plans to equip West Germany with such weapons will be one of the dominant points of discussion at the Congress of the West German Social Democratic Party scheduled for May 19th to 23rd in Stuttgart.

Three-quarters of all the resolutions on general policy submitted to the Congress by local organisations call for a ban on the a-bomb in West Germany. A very high proportion of the 28 resolutions on this subject do not confine themselves to general sentiments, but make concrete proposals for the establishment of an atom-free zone in central Europe, for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Germany, and for some form of German neutralisation.

Many of the resolutions call for the Social Democratic Party to use all "parliamentary and extra-parliamentary methods" in the fight against atomic death. "Extra-parliamentary methods" are generally understood in Germany to include the general strike weapon. The Social Democratic organisation in Krefeld, an old socialist stronghold, tabled a resolution stating: "As long as the Federal Government insists on arming the Federal Army with atomic weapons, all Social Democrats should refuse army service".

The important Frankfurt/Main district organisation called for talks between East and West Germany on the atom-free zone, withdrawal of all foreign troops, and a programme for the normalisation of relations between the two halves of Germany, including such points as the ending of "cold war" propaganda, increased inter-zonal trade, and joint preparations for a German peace treaty.

On the industrial front, dozens of resolutions have been tabled by local party organisations calling for a renewed statement that party policy stands for the nationalisation of basic industries such as coal, steel and atomic energy.

Adenauer's Storm Troop Minister Attacks Referendum Plan

The West German Government will take all possible measures to prevent the holding of a plebiscite or referendum on nuclear weapons in West Germany, Minister of the Interior Gerhard Schroeder stated in the West German Parliament on April 24th.

"Any sort of referendum, either on a country-wide scale or in the separate provinces, is an act aimed at undermining the constitution" said Herr Schroeder, who was a member of Hitler's storm troops.

The West German Parliament was debating a Social Democratic motion calling for a referendum in which all voters should be asked to reply to these questions:

"1. Are you in favour of equipping German forces with nuclear weapons?

2. Are you in favour of the installation of bases for launching nuclear weapons?"

Spokesmen of all parties with the exception of the Social Democratic Party opposed the referendum plan. The referendum bill will be submitted to parliament for its third reading during May.

In the meantime provincial authorities in various parts of West Germany are going ahead with their local plans for referendums on the subject.

Mikoyan Visits Both German States

Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastasius Mikoyan paid a two-day visit to Berlin, capital of the German Democratic Republic, at the end of April. He was returning to Moscow from the first visit to be paid to West Germany by a senior Soviet statesman.

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STUDENTS FROM ALL OVER

By Helmut Zemke

There are now about 1700 foreign students studying in universities in the German Democratic Republic, including an increasing number from non-socialist countries — Indians, Arabs, Nigerians and Sudanese, Chinese, Finns, Czechs, Bulgarians, Vietnamese, Koreans, Mongolians and Indonesians — most of whom are studying technology, natural sciences or medicine.

There are no insuperable language difficulties. When a Syrian wants to talk to a Mongolian he talks to him in German — or even in Saxon dialect. To begin with, teachers use an intermediate language — English, French or Russian — to bridge the gap and to explain grammar; but after six months or a year, language instruction concentrates on the special technical vocabulary required in the various faculties. Visits to factories and talks with workers help towards an understanding of our economic and social structure and to remove certain misconceptions.

In other countries professors and lecturers are in the habit of inviting students to their homes. This pleasant custom has unfortunately been rather forgotten in our country. But the Foreign Students' Institute is a good substitute. It is much more than a language institute, for it offers a home to students all through their years at the university.

One of the students we met there is Maria Shalapatova, a Bulgarian girl who grew up in Dimitroffgrad on the Maritza. Her father was a tobacco worker and his wages were small, so her early childhood was over-shadowed by poverty and worry about her father, for when she was four years old the fascists jailed him.

We went with Maria to the Leipzig courthouse where Georgi Dimitroff made his great stand twenty-five years ago. As she looked at the cell where Dimitroff had been imprisoned for many months she certainly thought about her father and about the great changes which have taken place in her life since then.

Maria is preparing to study mathematics at Leipzig University next September, when she has conquered the main language difficulties. Here her famous countryman also serves as an example; Dimitroff read an astonishing amount of the most varied literature during his imprisonment.

"When I have time I read — preferably Vaptsaroff, the Bulgarian revolutionary poet. But I also read German books. I go in for gymnastics too. But all this is not so very interesting for you", said Maria. "The girl with whom I share my room has a much more interesting life story."

Wong is a dainty little Vietnamese girl. She has a cheerful, friendly smile, although life has not treated her in a very friendly way. She had to flee with her father from the French, into the swampy forests. She was eighteen at the time of the decisive victory of Dien Bien Phu and soon after that, she was sent here to study German, so that she can act as an interpreter. She knows how much her country needs her.

One thing was quite new to Wong when she came to East Germany — snow, and it was a real thrill for her this winter.

(cont. on next page)

Miss Wong from Vietnam (left) and her friend Maria Shalapatova from Bulgaria (right)

The cook in the Foreign Students' Institute has to know his business, for he has to provide food to please national and individual tastes, religious customs etc. The rice has to be cooked properly for the Chinese students, Mohammedans cannot eat pork, some Indian students are vegetarians too. But I also saw Sudanese enjoying fried eggs and potatoes.

However, most students prepare little dishes for themselves in their rooms. When we met An San-chiu, Chinese student of German, she was busy making chiao-tse (giaoz in the new standard spelling, ed.). Small dumplings stuffed with minced meat, cabbage, pork fat and chives.

In the new students' hostel in the Nuremberger Strasse there are even complete kitchenettes on each floor, and every evening the most intriguing odours arise from these; Vietnamese steamed rice with mutton mingling with German pork chops. But since I tasted chiao-tse a chop has no special attractions for me.

(Abridged from "Wochenpost", Berlin, No. 15, 1958)

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION?

By the Editor

The old stories about an alleged persecution of the church in East Germany have been trotted out in the western press in the past week or two, and the time has come to get the record straight.

Various degrees of friction and difficulties between the various Christian churches and the state have existed at one time or another in almost all countries in the "Christian" world during the past nineteen centuries: it is not surprising that there should be some degree of friction or misunderstanding today in Germany, where one united Protestant Church stretches across the boundaries of the divided country, and where the Government of one German state, the German Democratic Republic, is purely secular.

Today's Situation

Now what is the actual situation with regard to the church in East Germany today? First of all, it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of the East Germans who profess adherence to any religion are members of the Evangelical Church. The latest census figures, those for 1950, showed that about 14 million of the 18 million population described themselves as Evangelical Christians. This does not mean, of course, that there are 14 million church goers. As in Britain today, only a small minority of the nominal Christians — perhaps ten or fifteen percent — actually go to church regularly, though a rather larger proportion get married by a clergyman, or show their church allegiance in a similar rather tenuous form.

Is the church persecuted in any way in East Germany? The answer to this is a quite clear and categorical NO. The churches are open in every town and village, exactly as they have been for hundreds of years: the clergy hold their regular services and minister to their flocks in exactly the way they have done for hundreds of years. Freedom of religion is not merely guaranteed in the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic; it is applied in practice.

Financial Support

Over and above this full freedom of religious observance, the government has made very large sums of money available to help in the restoration of churches damaged in the war, particularly churches of historical and artistic interest.

In addition, the government actually gives the Evangelical Church a yearly subsidy of 12 million marks to help in the upkeep of various hospitals, orphanages etc, which are run by the church. Nearly one thousand students of theology study at the universities, subsidised by state funds. School buildings are made available for voluntary religious instruction given outside school hours to those children whose parents desire it.

Grounds for Friction

What then are the grounds for friction? Main point of friction number one is the "civic initiation ceremony" which is conducted for school leavers. Boys and girls, on a voluntary basis, can participate in special civics courses for the last few months before leaving school. These civics courses include visits to museums, factories and farms, and lectures on moral and social themes which correspond very closely to those given, for instance, by the old "Socialist Sunday Schools" in Britain. The courses culminate in a solemn ceremony in which the school leavers promise to be good citizens and to help in the building of a socialist state. The promise is rather similar in many ways to the Boy Scout oath taken by boys in Britain. Similar secular ceremonies for school leavers are held, incidentally, in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries.

The leadership of the Evengelical Church has, however, set its face against such secular ceremonies. Bishop Dibelius, Chairman of the Evangelical Church, has opposed the ceremonies with the fundamentalist argument that "the young people are taught that the religious legend of the miraculous creation of the world has been contraverted by science". Evangelical opposition to the ceremonies has been expressed in a ban on the confirmation of boys and girls who participate in the secular ceremonies. This is in practice practically an excommunication of those young people who want to pledge themselves to be good citizens of the German Democratic Republic. In various places in East Germany the clergy have refused burial in consecrated ground to persons who had participated in the secular ceremonies.

Church one Entity

Main point of friction number two is a result of the fact that the Evangelical Church still forms one entity in the divided Germany of today. The Church Synod or Assembly, which decides church policy, is composed of churchmen from both the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic, and meets alternately in East and West.

In 1957 the Synod voted its approval of a special treaty concluded between the Evangelical Church and the West German state on the question of religious pastoral guidance for the new West German

Wehrmacht; a number of church functionaries from East Germany were amongst those voting for this treaty, which lays down the conditions for the appointment of Army Chaplains, barracks churches, etc. The agreement was attacked at the time by East German newspapers and politicians, who pointed out that by giving their agreement the East German bishops had in fact sanctioned the re-establishment of the West German Wehrmacht under its old nazi generals.

With the recent decision to arm the Wehrmacht with nuclear weapons the position has become more acute, and the Synod of the Evangelical Church has been faced very frankly with the question: "Can we continue to provide army chaplains who would have the task of invoking God's blessing on atomic rockets?"

That is the position as it stands today.

It would be quite wrong to suggest, of course, that a majority of churchmen in either East or West Germany are in favour of blessing the a-bomb. Prominent clergy and lay Christians in both parts of Germany have been playing a big part in the fight for peace. It would be equally wrong to suggest that all churchmen in East Germany who do not see eye to eye with the government are fundamentalist bigots: many of them feel, rightly or wrongly, that they are faced with a clash of loyalties.

It would be foolish to predict the outcome of the present arguments and discussions: but whatever the outcome, one thing is quite certain — the churches in East Germany will remain open and those members of the population who feel the need of religion will be free to practice it as they and their forefathers have done.

BARGES TO FOOT BILL

A special fee will in future be levied on West German barges carrying supplies to West Berlin through the water-ways of the German Democratic Republic, it was announced in Berlin on May 3rd.

The money thus raised will be used to pay for very extensive flood protection measures on the river Elbe. These measures have been made necessary by the fact that the West German authorities have begun damming operations on the Elbe a few miles below the point where it leaves the German Democratic Republic. The East German Minister of Transport has repeatedly asked the West German Minister of Transport for joint consultations on the project, but all his letters have remained unanswered. Such joint consultations are normal international practice where damming projects, etc., may affect the waterways of a neighbouring state.

The official announcement of the imposition of the new fees stated: "The Government of the German Democratic Republic cannot allow the costs arising from the unilateral action of the Bonn Government to be a burden on the population of the Republic."

About 30 % of all goods imported to West Berlin from West Germany are carried by water transport, which is cheaper than road or rail transport.

MAY DAY — ANTI-A DAY

May Day was celebrated in both halves of Germany by big demonstrations against nuclear weapons and for an atom-free zone in central Europe.

In Hamburg 200,000 people, the largest number for over 25 years, marched on May Day, and the main tenor of nearly all banners carried was opposition to nuclear weapons. Similar big demonstrations were reported from most parts of West Germany.

In West Berlin, where May Day parades in recent years have often been marked by an "anti-eastern" obsession, about 25,000 people, mostly trade unionists and young people, marched under anti-bomb banners. Popular slogans included "Against Atom Death — For a Referendum"; "Reunification Is Only Possible Without A-Weapons", and "Down with the Senile Atom Warrior". The last slogan referred to Chancellor Adenauer, who is 82.

In East Berlin an estimated 250,000 people demonstrated against atomic death and in favour of the peace policy of the German Democratic Republic.

Committee Seeks British Links

The West German "Committee Against Atomic Armament of the German Federal Republic" will seek links with similar bodies in Britain, it was announced on April 20th. At its constituent meeting in Cologne the Committee decided to send a delegation to London to establish contact.

The committee issued an appeal to the people of West Germany, calling on them to demonstrate on May Day together with the trade unions against nuclear arms. The appeal pointed out that atom arms for West Germany constituted a breach of Article 25 of the West German Constitution.

Police Raid A-Committee

West German police raided the Munich offices of the "Committee Against Atomic Armament" on April 30th, and searched the private dwellings of two leading members of the committee. The police claimed that they were seeking evidence that the committee had collected money without applying for a licence.

The Social Democratic fraction of the Bavarian Parliament immediately protested against the police action, which was described as an underhand attempt to suppress a political movement by making trouble for it.

Commenting on May 1st on the police raid, the Social Democratic newspaper "Fraenkische Tagespost" stated: "Almost exactly 25 years after the nazis dissolved the free trade unions, the police have given the latest proof that we are on the road to becoming a police state. And that is a very mild statement of the situation. The raids have only one aim: to terrorise the opponents of atomic armament... Since when has it been the fashion in a democratic state to use such rigorous police methods in the case of an unauthorised collection? It looks as though the authorities are searching for an excuse to declare all opponents of atomic arms as enemies of the state."

FIRST JET

The first jet-airliner to be built in the German Democratic Republic underwent initial ground-testing at the beginning of May. The new jet-liner, which is due for its first flight tests in the next few weeks, has a cruising speed of over 500 miles per hour and can carry 72 passengers. It is powered by four jet-turbines, each with a thrust of about 7000 lbs.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

Regular readers of GERMAN REPORT are probably getting used to some of the astonishing things that go on in West German courts these days; perhaps they are not so astonishing when we recall that a high proportion of the judges and lawyers are old nazis who have never made the slightest attempt to break with the past. But a few days ago a court in Nuremberg handed down a decision which deserves to be put on record.

The court had been dealing with the case of SS General Simon, SS Major Gottschalk, and Wehrmacht Major Otto. These three gentlemen had been charged with manslaughter because, in the closing days of the war in 1945, they had hanged three peasants in the village of Brettheim. The three peasants had tried to save their village from destruction by disarming four members of the Hitler Youth who intended to "hold the village at all costs" against the advancing Americans.

The case of the three officers has been dragging through the West German courts for years: in the first hearing three years ago they were acquitted; the Federal Court found the acquittal so astonishing that it referred the case back: and now, on April 23rd, the officers were acquitted once again.

And the acquittal was not based on any uncertainty about the facts. The accused made no bones about the fact that they had actually carried out the hangings; but they claimed that the hangings were quite justified since the four disarmed adolescent Hitler youths were "carrying out an operation of great military importance" and the peasants who disarmed them had been "undermining the nationally-important will to resist".

I think that the tone of this trial can best be shown by an episode during the summing up by the defence counsel. He admitted that his clients had hanged the three villagers, but argued that this form of execution was "unpleasant but not cruel". Referring to the fact that the three executed men had had placards pinned to their chests inscribed with the word "traitor", the defence counsel said: "The executed men were the victims of circumstances, just like General Gottschalk, who was forced to do something he did not really like doing. The placards hung on slander. We should recall that the their chests did not constitute a cross of Jesus was marked with a placard 'Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judeorum' (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews). My client is soft-hearted, sensitive and musical. Such a man could not possibly commit a murder. Compared to the horrors of the Thirty Year's War the execution in Brettheim was absolutely gentlemanly".

This last sentence, incidentally, is so hair-raising that I must assure readers that it has not been changed in sense in any way by translation. The defence counsel actually used the English word "gentlemanly" in his speech.

The court reporter of the leading West German newspaper "Die Welt", who attended the trial, commented after it had ended: "Sometimes it seemed as though the court intended to sentence the men who had been executed, and not the men who were accused".

Commenting on the acquittal, the Paris newspaper "Le Monde" stated: "The daily practice of the West German courts shows that a human life is very cheap, if the murderer wore a uniform and showed no scruples in launching blood baths. The courts for years have shown their mercy — or perhaps we should say their solidarity — for the most dreadful war criminals."

*

I always enjoy reading the full transcripts of President Eisenhower's weekly press conferences as printed in the "New York Times"; it is not the content of Ike's statements which I find so illuminating, but the form. If his muddled statements at his conferences are anything to go on, then he has one of the wooliest minds of the century. As an example let me just quote one paragraph from the full transcript of his press conference on April 2nd:

"But this doesn't mean that we should seek — that we should fail to seek some common ground where there is a beginning made toward agreement in which we can work together better cooperatively. I have — let me read you just a little — you say we have been doing the same things, and I am just going to take the things where the — just the subjects — I am not going to read this whole paper. I will give you this paper if you can get copies made. This is just the subjects that the United States has proposed unilaterally, not with others, with respect to our allies — unilaterally."

No prize is offered for the difficult task of disentangling what he was trying to say, if anything.

But all this is just leading up to a slightly different subject. The West German Government, as everybody knows, regards itself as America's model ally. Whenever West German cabinet ministers feel in need of a little backbone stiffening, they make a state visit to the United States, where they get the redcarpet treatment, and come back to West Germany feeling that the world really does revolve round them after all.

In the past few weeks, West German Defence Minister Franz-Josef Strauss, and Economics Minister Ludwig Erhard have made the standard pilgrimage, and come back glowing with self-satisfaction. Their glow was rather tarnished on April 10th, however, for on that date President Eisenhower revealed at his press conference that he could not tell one fat German from another (both Strauss and Erhard come in big economy size). Here is the relevant passage from the shorthand note of Eisenhower's press conference of that date:

"And I was interested when I had, oh, my last German friend, the finance officer — Strauss was it not?"

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